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ENTOMOLOGY IN THE UNITED STATES

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In its early days, entomology in the United States had not reached its full stature as a respected and remunerative profession, peopled by graduates from great institutions. Even its outstanding men of true scientific worth were only high-class amateurs, some of whom in time became our great economic entomologists and founders of this branch of applied biology. In order to be an entomologist, one had to have an independent mind, a mind verging on, and sometimes going into, eccentricity, a mind proof against the sneers and ridicule of the vulgar and the unlearned. For, why should any man in his sane senses chase nasty bugs when there was no money in it, was the question of the *practical* mind. And many an insect collector harbored mental quirks.

There was, for instance, Hans Strecker, who collected the great tropical showy butterflies. Gainfully, he carved grave-stones and monuments. To satisfy himself, he described these gorgeous butterflies and gave them names from the mythologies of other days, as Jupiter, Minerva, and so on. He even went to the Bible and on one he clapped the name Jehovah to the horror of all good religious people.

Then there was the great collector and describer of beetles, Colonel Thomas Casey, of the U. S. Engineers and a graduate of West Point. He produced in the course of a long, busy life in his profession, numerous ponderous tomes in which he described minutely to the last little hair floods of beetles into the most abstruse refinements of categories. And all this intense productive scientific

* Mr. Bueno died on May 3, 1948. This article written in 1944 was found among his papers.

work was done in his moments of leisure in a most exacting branch of army service!

Then there were the LeContes, father and son; Dr. John Eatton LeConte, the father, was a U. S. Army surgeon, and on the side an enthusiastic collector of beetles and a highly skilled taxonomist. In fact, he and his son, Dr. John LeConte, laid down the broad bases for the classification, most of which are in vogue today. As these remarks are not a formal history, here is one of the traditional episodes of collecting. One day the mail brought to one of the LeContes a little parcel, which being opened revealed a very rare beetle, out of his collection—or so it seemed—and it was found to be so when the proper box was opened, and the singleton was not in it. A little later, the mail brought a letter from a repentant fellow-collector, which explained everything. In substance, so the story goes, the letter stated that its writer when he was being shown the LeConte collection, had seen the specimen, which he really needed to complete his own. And while LeConte was looking aside, the temptation had been too much for him, so he had removed the specimen and pinned it inside his tall hat and thus hidden had taken it away. But his conscience had troubled him for a year and more, until he could no longer stand it; so the missing beetle was returned very contritely. Dr. LeConte had in the meantime had no occasion to look at the box containing the treasure, so he had never missed it!

Incidentally, in the more primitive days of insect collecting, the inside or the outside of a hard hat was made the repository of such insects as were put on pins in the field. So, after a good summer day, with plenty of insects on the wing, the primitive entomologist could be seen returning with a hat bristling with bugs.

Of current entomologists of my own day, whom I knew in person, here are a few of the most striking ones.

There was Robert P. Dow, one-time secretary of the Brooklyn Entomological Society, and a good secretary, too. His flowing handle-bar reddish mustache, his tousled hair, his bright blue eager eyes, were features at meetings. He also was active editor of the *Bulletin of the Brooklyn Entomological Society*, when it was revived after several years of dormancy.

Dow was a nephew or grandnephew of the noted early prohibitionist Neal Dow of Maine. Withal, he did not share his relative's views in the matter—far from it. In business, he was a dealer in obsolete securities, at which he made a very good living. His procedure was very simple. He would bid in at auctions of un-

marketable securities for estates bundles of unspecified cats and dogs, for a song. Then he would hold them; and some day, sooner or later, some one would want the elegantly printed certificates for some financial reason, and then he cashed in, sometimes very lucratively, but never at a loss.

His long suit was archaeological and historical entomology. The *Bulletin* published these very interesting articles of his, which brought to life and made real so many of these founders of the science, in their more human and less desiccated moments. For instance, there was the great French entomologist, the founder of the scientific study of the classification of beetles, Count de Jean, one of Napoleon's generals. It was told of him that at one of the battles he spied a very rare and desirable beetle perched on a bush. He got off his horse, battle or no battle, and popped the beetle into his killing bottle, which he always carried in his saddle-holster. A stray bullet struck the holster, and scattered fragments of holster and bottle, *and* the beetle. DeJean was not discouraged. He got off his horse and searched for the beetle to the whistling of passing bullets until he had retrieved the valuable specimen and put it in the other holster!

Dow also wrote of Lillith of legend, the alternate and devilish wife of our father Adam; and of Baal-Zebub, the Father of Flies and/or of Lies, known to us as Beelzebub, the devil. In his opus "The Testimony of the Tombs" he delved into the entomological lore of Egypt and figured insects from designs on sarcophagi and in tombs.

He attained his entomological peak when, with ineffable complacency he gave his own name to a genus he described—not crudely but quite effectively. He made a sort of anagram of his initials, R. P. D., and invented the name *Arpidius*, thus embalming himself unto entomological posterity.

One time, he and I were collecting about Todd's Pond, close by White Plains, and now a real estate development. And this is a dramatization of one of the happenings.

The Caterpillar and the Collector (more politely, *Entomologist*).
Scene—The sloping, grassy, weedy north shore of the pond, in what is now Westminster Ridge, White Plains, N. Y.

Time—A late spring afternoon.

Actors—The Collector on his own two feet, eyes roving hither and yon, mustachios fluttering in the breeze; the Caterpillar, name unknown, calm, collected (and uncollected) on a leaf atop a bushy weed.

Chorus—Me.

'Twas a balmy, sunshiny day—birds a-twitter, flowers a-bloom. The Collector (and the Chorus) strolling along finding treasures and more or less basking in the warm sun.

The Collector spies the Caterpillar and deftly picks it off its place of rest, rolls it tenderly between thumb and fingers and after inspection, remarks meditatively: "I wonder what it tastes like?"

The Chorus—"Would you like to know?"

The Collector—"Yes".

Chorus—"Why don't you bite it and find out?"

Collector—"Why not?"

Chorus—"Do you mean to say you would eat it?"

Collector—"Yes. I know the taste of 300 kinds of caterpillars!"

He did; and went on to say at length how every caterpillar has a distinct flavor—the taste of the plant it fed on.

Scientific ardor, which leads us up strange by-ways of inquisitiveness, could attain no greater heights!

Eventually, Dow gave up entomology and moved to California, where he dealt in real estate. His entomological activities were at an end.

Still another eccentric. He was a keen observer of insects. He was also a rapacious collector. One of the founders of the Brooklyn Entomological Society, he seldom missed its meetings; in later years, during the proceedings, he could be seen assiduously currying his finger nails to remove the accumulated earth acquired in digging insects out of their hiding places in the ground with his fingers. Those of us who knew him in person, do not need his name; to the outside world, he shall be nameless.

He was the collector of fiction and legend personified. While scrupulously clean in his person, his clothes always were on the edge of disintegration and frightfully in need of cleaning and pressing. I have seen him running a cultivator on his Long Island farm in topless hat and bottomless pants. Yet, he was a gentleman of education and breeding and learning, an early Cornell graduate, descended from a Colonial family of standing and wealth, original Royal Patentees of extensive lands on Long Island. His face showed breed, even though over-breeding leading to eccentricity and even psychosis in his advanced years.

Now and again, before the outlying country about New York City and Brooklyn was built up, the entomological societies would have field days, when a number of collectors would go afield in company. These outings usually took place in the spring or

autumn, faring forth to the Palisades in New Jersey or to the beaches on Long Island.

Our protagonist's performances at one trip to Rockaway Beach are worth recording. He always carried with him on such trips—and on other occasions also—a genuine pre-Civil War carpet-bag or grip-sack to hold his takings. In its recesses lay hidden from a scoffing world the usual assortment of collecting bottles for killing insects and other oddments for collecting, and always a lunch of sorts wrapped in a greasy piece of newspaper which had distinctly seen better days and which also had held other lunches aforetime. Anything of value to an ant was a treasure to him. His collecting started at the end of the elevated railroad line, when he raced through the car picking up and stowing away discarded newspapers—any date and any frowziness. One time he had an actual dispute with a train guard who had the daring to lay his unholy and (necessarily) unclean hands on a coveted second hand paper—and got away with it! Each newspaper was carefully smoothed out, and into the belly of the grip it went!

Once the sea-beach was reached, the really serious collecting began. There was the tide line strewn with juicy treasures of flotsam and jetsam—mostly the latter, including the ship's garbage and slops. What finds! Champagne and wine corks, fishing net floats, empty bottles, crates (sadly abandoned by him to destruction by the waves and the winds, or perhaps destined to be kindlings for some one more able to carry them away), skeletonized sea-horses, sand-fleas, earwigs and beetles under boards and chips, drowned insects of all sorts in windrows on the tide-line and mingled with uprooted eel-grass and sea-weeds—all enticed our collector. Among this wreckage he found a battered flour-barrel. After a careful inspection of his trove, said our collector: "The hoops are good"; and gathered they were and draped over his neck and shoulders. At the end of the trip, the party arrived eventually at the New York City garbage dump heaps on Barren Island.

And here was the crowning point of a well-spent day! Perched on top of a mound of trash was an obsolete pair of pants, all crumpled, rumpled and filthy. These were secured, shaken out and measured for length against himself by their finder. With the remark "They are as good as those I have on", into the bag they went, more or less neatly folded.

All these treasures were carefully sorted out and stowed away in his quarters. At the Long Island family place he had a small shed close by the railroad tracks; on one side, piled to the ceiling were

newspapers, on the opposite side, bottles of all descriptions. This shed unfortunately was burned down in a brush fire, set, so he said, by sparks from the Long Island Railroad locomotives. Later, he built himself a capacious barn on the property, for a treasure house removed from danger of incineration.

A choice episode was the sip of beer. After the close of the meetings, the members adjourned to a German biergarten nearby the place of meeting, going into the back room by the Family Entrance, where they were served sauer-fleisch and other hearty Teutonic food and delicacies, washed down with foaming steins of "echt bier"—none of the feeble latter-day imitations or "ersatz". The cost of the supper was equally apportioned among the eaters, but the beer was individually paid for according to consumption. Our hero never joined in the general feast—he'd dive into his omnipresent carpet-bag and take from its dark recesses his newspaper-wrapped refection and consume it solo—and no costly beer for him, at a nickel a shot. But, one time, thirst was too strong for him. Tapping one of the convivals on the shoulder, he murmured "Mr. G., do you mind if I take a sip of your beer?" To which the addressee replied by ordering for him a flowing tankard for his private delectation!

As the years went by—he was in his middle seventies by this time—he took up nudism in a big way and practised it in his own back-yard to the horror of the neighbors, who had him summoned before the court to explain his unseemliness. But the case never came to trial, because the cold winds of early Fall gave him a pneumonia, which took him off. A sad end for a fine mind gone astray!

All his collectings, including many fine insects, were junked by his heirs. His excellent collection of pamphlets went for waste-paper to the junkman, a real scientific loss!

In person he was strongly built. His stooped shoulders took away from his height, which must have been some six feet in youth. He had a clean-cut face, always scrupulously shaven. But his attire was always slovenly, to be conservative in statement.

On one occasion, he spoke before the Society about broad-shouldered beetles, scientifically known as buprestids. He began quite formally, telling of their habit of boring in dead trees in their grub stage. By imperceptible degrees he went from dead pines killed by forest fires on Long Island, kindled by the burning sparks from the Long Island trains, to wind up in a blaze of glory on the iniquities of this transportation system. Another talk on mosquitoes took him directly to the nefarious doings of the city ad-

ministration, which had filched his ideas for mosquito control and then would not listen to him at hearings on the subject. As a cold fact, he was one of the two originators of the primary methods of destroying mosquitoes in their breeding places.

At any meeting, anywhere and on any subject, he could be counted on to inject some irrelevant remarks at length, *somehow* hanging on something said.

The Brooklyn Entomological Society, at the time I became a member, about 1902, used to meet at the establishment of the American Entomological Company, which was George Franck, then at 1040 DeKalb Avenue, Brooklyn. Dr. John B. Smith, head of the Department of Entomology at Rutgers and State Entomologist of New Jersey was president at that time; and Mr. Archibald C. Weeks secretary. Both were of the early incorporators and founders of the Society.

John B. Smith (nee Schmidt) was one of our great economic entomologists, and had the distinction of having cleared the Jersey marshes of mosquitoes (*pro tem.*). His father, an old time German, was a cabinet maker and collector of insects, and he devised and made the justly famous Schmidt insect boxes. As I remember it, his son was to be a lawyer, in fact, was a lawyer; but the insect urge was too strong for him, and he became a great entomologist, his specialty being the night-flying moths. He had a great sense of humor, and had a truly Teutonic fondness for beer. He was short and rotund; his face was of the shape and color of the sun in full effulgence, and was surrounded with rather thin whiskers, his hair rather thin on top.

George Franck also was German, and had one of the finest flows of vituperation in entomological circles. He also had the biggest stock of insects for sale at that time, as well as all the requirements for collectors. One time he showed me a \$500 moth—an insignificant-looking little brown thing from Cuba, which was the only other known specimen taken. He sold it by cablegram to Lord Rothschild, of Tring, England; and he showed me the reply to ship the moth at 100 pounds sterling. But he had another not so profitable transaction, which he narrated to me with a splendid flow of ob-
jurgation. It was a locust year, it seems; and seventeen-year locusts have always been in demand for study in entomological courses. A then young man—this was all of forty years ago now—came to him and asked if Franck wanted 17-years locusts. Which he did. And how many? All you can bring. Ten thousand? Ten thousand, if he got them, at a stipulated price. Franck thought

the young man would have difficulty in getting them. But the young man knew where there was a big brood, so he showed up with 10,000 in alcohol, and demanded payment. Both being German, they fought over this, and the young man did not make the sale. I heard the final sputterings of the fire-works, and they were colossal! Franck always had a quid in his cheek, and had a fine range and excellent aim for the superfluous juice. When he got mad, it flowed and spurted.

NOTICE

The Torre-Bueno Collection of Hemiptera. Hemipterists will be interested in knowing that the University of Kansas purchased the J. R. de la Torre-Bueno collection of Hemiptera and title to the Kirkaldy collection shortly before the death of Mr. Bueno on May 3, 1948. This large collection was the accumulation of forty-seven years of active interest in the Hemiptera and contains much exotic material. It is especially rich in aquatic Hemiptera. The collection is being incorporated in the Francis Huntington Snow Entomological Collections and each specimen will bear a "J. R. de la Torre-Bueno Collection" label.

At the time of the delivery of the collection to the University of Kansas, May 2, 1948, Mr. Bueno retained some Arizona material upon which he proposed to work and some boxes of borrowed material. Unfortunately he died just a few days after the collections left his home and the retained material was later sent by Mrs. Bueno to the University of Kansas. The borrowed material will be returned to the owners as Mr. Bueno intended.—H. B. HUNGERFORD, Lawrence, Kansas.